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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was designed to study the uses made of reading tests by classroom teachers in Indiana with at least one year of experience in their respective classrooms. Of the 185 questionnaires distributed by local reading councils, 51 questionnaires were returned. The teachers responding taught in grades one through seven. They reported using 37 different tests: 84 percent used a battery of tests accompanying a basal reading series; 39 percent used reading achievement tests (some teachers used more than one achievement test); 41 percent used diagnostic tests; and 10 percent reported using intelligence tests as reading tests. Some of the responses indicated that most teachers probably use the previous year's scores to determine level of reading material and group placement and that they interpret grade equivalent scores as representing reading ability. Grade equivalent scores were found to be the most commonly filed test information in cumulative folders. (MKM)

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I.J.C. Reading Test Survey

The 1972-73 I.S.C. Studies and Research Committee recommended that the following year's committee undertake a study of the uses made of reading tests and the uses of the results from these tests. The 1973-74 Committee did accept this recommendation, and developed such a survey as one of their projects.

Approximately 185 questionnaires were distributed state wide through the local reading councils. It was requested that classroom teachers, not remedial reading teachers or reading specialists, complete the questionnaire. It was further requested that teachers responding to the questionnaire were in at least their second year of teaching in their present building. Fifty-one questionnaires were returned - a response of approximately twenty-eight per cent. The results were as follows.

1. Grade Levels Represented by the Respondents:

The respondents reported that they taught or represented the following grade levels.

grade	no.	grade	no.
ungraded	1	3	4
K-5	1	4	12
1	6	4-6	1
1-2	2	5	5
1-5	1	5-6	2
2	6	6	6
2-3	2	7	2

2. Tests Reported as Used:

The respondents reported the use of thirty-seven different tests. In some instances it was difficult to identify whether the reading test was reading achievement or diagnostic. A number of respondents reported tests used in their own classrooms, levels, or sections. They did not indicate tests used in other classrooms, levels, or sections.

Eight of the identified tests were individual or the battery of tests that accompany one of the newly adopted basal reading series. Eighty-four per cent of the respondents reported the use of these.

Fourteen of the identified tests appeared to be reading achievement tests. Obviously these were used widely as 139 per cent of the respondents reporting using them. That is, a number of the respondents listed more than one of these as being used during the year.

Twelve of the identified tests appeared to be reading diagnostic tests. Forty-one per cent reported the use of these.

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Two of the listed tests used for reading were intelligence tests, and one was a test for measuring mental maturity. Ten per cent of the respondents reported the use of these.

Of the tests reported by the respondents, twenty-nine per cent of them were machine scored and seventy-one per cent were hand scored. The results of the hand scored tests were immediately available. When machine scored, results were made available at various times throughout the year. May and September (tests administered the year before) were reported most frequently.

3. Uses Made of Scores:

The respondents reported that the following uses were made of the test results.

Uses	Percentage Reporting
for grouping or determining level of reading	51%
for determining reading progress	39%
for checking skill development	27%
for reporting to parents	12%
for instructional purposes	10%
to have information for the permanent records	4%
to determine the level of reading material	2%
to check the effectiveness of teacher's methods	2%
non-classifiable responses	6%
no answer	8%

It was interesting to note that a higher percentage of the respondents used the scores from reading tests for reporting to parents than for instructional purposes.

4. Information Filed in Cumulative Folders:

The respondents reported that the following information was filed in the cumulative record folders.

Information	Percentage Reporting
grade equivalent scores	63%
raw scores	45%
sub-test scores	37%
IBM Printout	37%
total score	35%
profile	33%
entire test	18%
nothing filed	6%
no answer	4%

5. Test Results and Planning Instruction:

One questionnaire item elicted information as to how, if at all, the test results were used to guide or plan instruction. Respondents reported the following.

Uses	Percentage Reporting
for grouping, determining levels, placement	48%
for diagnostic purposes	25%
to "guide instruction" (no specifics reported)	24%
for the selection of reading materials	12%
to determine achievement	2%
"use occasionally," "perhaps"	8%
not used for this purpose	8%
no answer	2%

6. Interpretation of Grade Equivalent Scored:

Grade equivalent scores were reported to be interpreted and used in the following ways.

Interpretations and Uses	Percentage Reporting
to determine ability level	24%
for grouping	14%
as a guide for the class average	14%
to plan special group instruction	6%
to use in selecting reading materials	4%
to aid in "planning instruction"	4%
to determine individual progress	4%
to find a point to begin individual testing	2%
as a "screening device"	2%
to locate the child's frustration level	2%
do not use the grade equivalent scores	6%
no answer	18%

7. Uses of Previous Test Results:

Most of the respondents reported that they referred to the previous year's test scores. The scores were used for the following purposes.

Uses	Percentage Reporting
to determine level of reading material	59%
for use in group placement	57%
for diagnostic purposes	51%
for cross-grade grouping	20%
other uses	10%
do not use previous test results	18%

8. Typicalness of Responses to Questionnaire:

In response to whether the statements on the questionnaire were thought to be typical for the respondents only or typical for most teachers in the respondents building, the following was reported.

typical for all teachers in the building	49%
typical only in my classroom	27%
no answer	24%

Summary and Conclusions:

Any interpretation of the information garnered in this study must be interpreted in light of a small number of responses to the questionnaire used. On the basis of the information received, it would appear that the Indiana classroom teacher:

1. administers more than one reading test during the year;
2. most likely uses one or more reading achievement test and possibly an individual or battery of tests which accompany the basal series being used;
3. receives the results of machine-scored standardized tests either in May or in September of the following year;
4. probably uses the results to determine the reading group or level for the child;
5. files some test information in the cumulative record folders;
6. interprets grade equivalent scores as representing reading ability; and
7. uses previous year's scores to determine level of reading material and group placement.

On the basis of the responses, it would appear that reading achievement and diagnostic tests are being used in classrooms in Indiana. However, it could possibly be asked if teachers are using the results of this testing to its fullest potential. For example, and hand scoring, of tests frequently provides an excellent opportunity for the diagnostic analysis of pupil performance. Seventy-one per cent of the tests reported used were hand scored. Yet only twenty-seven to thirty-seven per cent of the respondents reported that the results were used for diagnostic purposes.

The use of the test batteries that accompany basal reading series are justifiable for use with the basal series. However, the question remains, do these provide a complete picture of the child as a reader? One respondent reported that these were the only reading tests being used in the school this year. Another, not directly related, question that arises would be, "In how many school situations are the newer "reading levels" in the new basal series erroneously equated with the more traditional reading groups and/or grade levels?"

On the basis of the information garnered in this survey, it would appear that there may be some possible misuse of test results. An average of forty-two per cent of the respondents indicated that results from present or past tests were used for placing children in reading groups or for determining the levels on which they would work. This could possibly imply level of material to be used. In addition, an average of nineteen per cent stated that test results were used to determine the level of material to be used to determine the level of material to be used for reading.

If these responses mean that the test scores or grade equivalent scores were interpreted as the instructional level for the children, it may constitute a misuse of the scores. Most authorities in reading would agree that these test scores may more likely represent the children's frustration level. Only one respondent indicated this and then further indicated that the instruction and placement was determined with this in mind.

The number of tests reported as used would indicate a heavy financial expenditure. If, as it would appear from these findings, the main use of the test results is to place children in reading groups, is this sizeable expenditure justified?

It could also be stated that possibly some teacher inservice could be spent to provide work with the purpose and interpretations of the results of the tests administered in a school or school corporation. Perhaps then IQ tests would not be listed as reading tests. Likewise, time might be valuably spent in inservice sessions in training designed to help teachers learn to analyze test results diagnostically. If this were done, perhaps more teachers would have indicated diagnostic and instructional uses of test results on the questionnaire.